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ABSTRACT

Consultation services have been considered an essential and important role for school psychologists throughout the history of the field. Traditionally consultation has been cast as a problem-solving process, nevertheless, it can be thought of as a knowledge-linking process in which psychologists advance knowledge in schools to various mediators who provide instruction, education, socialization, and services to children and families. Several features of consultation make it indispensable in schools and schooling. Since consultation is an oral communication process it allows relatively rapid communication of information to potentially large numbers of individuals. Consultation can facilitate broad scale information dissemination through "word-of-mouth mechanisms" such as electronic media, workshops, and distance education formats. Consultation knowledge linking involves a mechanism to provide consultee/mediators with research generated knowledge and can facilitate knowledge linking through a negotiated personal interaction with consultees. Psychologists working in schools have numerous areas in which they can provide consultative knowledge linking functions. These areas include: (1) diagnosis/assessment; (2) prevention programs; (3) treatment programs; and (4) serving in a scientist practitioner role. (JBJ)

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Chapter Nineteen

Advancing Knowledge in Schools Through Consultative Knowledge Linking

Thomas R. Kratochwill

Consultation services have been considered an essential and important role for school psychologists throughout the history of the field. Traditionally, consultation service delivery has been cast as a problem-solving process. Our model of behavioral consultation and associated problem-solving process illustrate this typical focus in the delivery of school-based services (Bergan & Kratochwill, 1990). Nevertheless, consultation can be thought of as a knowledge-linking process in which psychologists advance knowledge in schools to various mediators who provide instruction, education, socialization, and services to children and families.

Consultants can engage in several linking functions and engage in activities that facilitate consultation knowledge linking roles. Because consultation is an interpersonal form of service delivery where social influence processes and face-to-face communication are central, the influence on socialization agents is potentially extensive and potent. Several features of consultation make it indispensable in schools and schooling within this context. To begin with, since consultation is an oralcommunication process it allows relatively rapid communication of information to potentially large numbers of individuals. Consultants are in a position to serve as a knowledge linking tool between the empirical scientific knowledge base developed in scientific psychology and education. In this regard, knowledge linking requires cutting edge information from both psychology and education and responsibility for monitoring the extensive knowledge base that exists in our field.

Consultation as a knowledge linking tool can also facilitate broad scale information dissemination through so-called "word of mouth" mechanisms. Dissemination of scientific information through electronic media, workshops, or distant education formats within and across school districts allow many individuals access to information that is often under-utilized in school settings. Fortunately, consultants have many new and quality electronic tools such as the internet to facilitate the retrieval and dissemination of information available.

Third, consultation knowledge linking involves a mechanism to provide consultee/mediators with research generated knowledge. Traditional mechanisms for administrators, teachers, and parents to acquire information is often through publications or communications that involve considerable sophisticated methodology and technical jargon. An important role of the consultant is to provide information that can be disseminated to many and diverse audiences in a way that maximizes utilization of the information

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for services to children and families.

Finally, consultation can facilitate knowledge linking through a negotiated personal interaction with consultees. Such an interaction can be that of expert or collaborator. In this regard, the consultee is not a passive recipient of technical information. Individuals in socialization roles provide unique issues which require the consultant to tailor make information while being sensitive to cultural, linguistic, economic, social, and ecological factors. The role of the consultant in this activity is indispensable to high quality services in schools.

Example Content Areas for Consultive Knowledge Linking

Psychologists working in schools have numerous areas in which they can provide consultive knowledge linking functions. These areas include: diagnosis/assessment, prevention programs, treatment programs, and serving in a scientist-practitioner role. Each of these areas is described in brief along with illustrations of areas that consultants can provide information.

Diagnosis/Assessment. Assessments and diagnostic problem solving continue to be important and rather intensive roles for psychologists in schools. Most schools and most school psychologists consider assessment to be indispensable. Increasingly, however, psychologists have been asked to engage in diagnostic problem solving and assessment that yields important information for the design, implementation, and monitoring of intervention programs. Traditional psychometric criteria such as reliability and validity are being reevaluated and consideration is being given to a new and broader range of measurement criteria to apply to our diagnosis and assessment tactics. For example, construct validity has taken on new meaning and the concept of the treatment utility of assessment has been introduced. Advances in measurement paradigms should not only prompt us to use them in our research and practice, but also to reconsider older more established systems of assessment that have been discarded in favor of new paradigms.

In recent years several systems of diagnostic problem solving have emerged which are critical to apply in schools in light of new information and consideration of emerging measurement technology (see Kratochwill & McGivern, 1996, for an overview). For example, psychologists increasingly can use the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM-IV) to identify a wide range of child and adolescent disorders. Estimates are that between 17 and 20 million children are experiencing major mental health problems in this country and many experience these problems in schools and as related to schooling. The DSM provides an organizational framework for problem solving and can prompt assessment activities to allow children access to mental health services in school and community settings. More importantly, the DSM may provide leads to treatments that are presented in the scientific literature and organized around its criteria.

Major advances have also occurred in several specific areas of assessment. One area is selected here for purposes of illustration. Major advances have occurred in functional assessment (analysis) of behavior. Behavior can be analyzed in terms of its topographical features (such as in the DSM), but engaging in an assessment that examines the functions of behavior often provides important leads for the design of effective treatment programs. Functional assessment can be used to evaluate a wide range of academic and behavioral problems that children experience and create many opportunities for a refined diagnostic process in understanding and treatment of academic and behavioral disorders.

Prevention Programming. Increasingly, psychologists have emphasized the need for prevention programming. Many prevention programs are implemented in schools and school

psychologists are indispensable in developing, implementing, and monitoring effective prevention programs in school and school-linked areas. An important knowledge linking activity for school psychologists is to convey to schools the importance of spending resources on prevention programs. With growing numbers of children in need of psychological services and with the growing demand for limited resources, prevention can be presented as a viable option to reactive services driven by a problem solving process. The important issue is that knowledge has accumulated that attests to the strong impact that prevention programs can have in school and community-linked settings (e.g., Durlack, 1995).

As examples, psychologists have developed prereferral intervention programs that facilitate implementing interventions in the regular classroom. These programs may involve mainstreaming children who traditionally would have developed disabilities and would have been placed in special education settings. Psychologists also can implement programs that are likely to prevent classroom management difficulties for children at-risk or children experiencing major academic and behavioral problems. These programs, referred to as proactive classroom management, can be developed and put into place to reduce the emphasis on more traditional treatment programs or the use of reactive tactics.

Empirically-Based Treatment Programs. School psychologists have at their disposal a tremendous amount of information pertaining to empirically-based intervention programs. For example, psychologists have relied on meta-analysis or summaries of meta-analysis (e.g., Lipsley & Wilson, 1993) to guide their selection of intervention programs that are likely to have considerable benefit for children and families. Major advances have been made in this knowledge domain and an important knowledge linking activity for psychologists is to select and disseminate this kind of information to consumers of psychological services.

Psychologists also have at their disposal a growing body of literature that provides important information on empirically-based treatments using the criteria provided by the Task Force on Promotion and Dissemination of Psychological Procedures (1995). A variety of interventions are now available to select for specific disorders or problems that individuals are likely to confront in schools. This information provides a critical knowledge base for psychologists who work in schools since knowledge linking activities and functions can be directly used where there is both common scientific standards and consensus pertaining to efficacy. In this regard, psychologists maximize their probability providing effective treatment to children, youth and families. Such a knowledge linking activity is indispensable for quality services.

Scientist-Practitioner. The knowledge linking approach to consultive service delivery embraces the traditional scientist-practitioner model. Clearly, an important role for scientist-practitioner consultive knowledge linking is the design and evaluation of applied programs whether they be diagnostic/assessment, preventative, or treatment oriented. Evaluation of quality treatments can be an important function to use in formative or summative decision making on either applied academic or social programs developed in schools. In this regard, psychologists functioning in the schools may provide an important role in the policy making area.

At the individual case level psychologists can also help in the problem solving process through making decisions on the efficacy of interventions that are being implemented. This scientist-practitioner model has traditionally been critical to the field and is perhaps still under-utilized as a knowledge linking activity (Barlow, Hayes, & Nelson, 1984). It is implied in the scientist-practitioner model that quality diagnostic/assessment, prevention, and treatment program

approaches will be selected. Equally important in the process of functioning as a scientist-practitioner consultive knowledge linker is providing information to consumers on *ineffective strategies or strategies not yet supportable*. For example, currently there is a wide scale interest in the psychological profession in embracing drug interventions for a variety of child and adolescent disorders. Yet, few empirical studies attest to the efficacy of drug treatment in a wide range of childhood disorders, of course with notable exceptions (Hayes & Heiby, 1996). An important scientific perspective is educating consumers and socialization agents in the efficacy of drugs and influencing policy and decision making pertaining to the selection of these interventions for treatment of a wide range of child and youth difficulties.

Similarly, as innovations in psychological and educational technology emerge, a critical perspective on the application of these procedures is indispensable in the role. One example of this role is in the area of facilitative communication, a tactic which many educational institutions and individual programs have embraced as an option for services to individuals with severe developmental disabilities such as autism. Knowledge of the empirical literature in this area would argue for alternatives for programming for these individuals (Jackson, Mulick, & Schwartz, 1995).

Summary and Conclusions

In this paper I have argued that knowledge in schools can be advanced through consultive knowledge linking functions. School psychologist consultants trained and educated as scientist-practitioners have a wide range of functions and mechanisms that facilitate knowledgelinking in schools. These knowledge linking activities are indispensable to schools and to individuals who are involved in socialization of our children in school and community settings. School psychologists provide a unique opportunity to develop effective diagnostic/assessment, prevention, treatment, and evaluation schemes to improve the quality of children and families' lives in educational settings.

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